

CREATIVE HUB

SEPTEMBER EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things
creative in Exeter!

What have you been up to this month?

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity
you'd like to be shared? Send us a message on our
social media channels and we'll include what we can
in future editions.

Want more updates, opportunities and creative news?

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Kaleidoscopic Minds

We are delighted to announce that Kaleidoscopic Minds: Festival of Neurodiversity is returning for 2026. An event designed by, and for, neurodivergent people and their families. This will be a day to celebrate the neurodivergent community, to inspire creativity, and to explore new connections, as well as discover support tools and regulation strategies. Ahead of the festival, we caught up with festival producer Emily Way-Evans to find out more.

This is the second year of Kaleidoscopic Minds. What have you learnt along the way?

Producing this festival has been such a personal journey for me, having been inspired by my own family's neurodivergence, and the barriers we faced when accessing creativity and connection, I just wanted to create a safe space for families like ours to find inspiration. And what I learnt was that the neurodivergent community are the most creative people there are, and when you give them that space then they will fill it with art, ideas, inspiration and beauty. It is truly wonderful to see it all come together.

What are you particularly looking forward to at the festival this year?

Essentially the festival is to celebrate the neurodivergent community, but it is also a place to explore support tools and regulation strategies, and this year I am particularly excited about Ceri Baker's Movement for Regulation workshops, PDA Devon's talk on The Power of peer Support, and the Lucy & Yak Re-Yak Embroidery workshop.



Why is it important to hold this festival within a creative community?

I believe that creativity is a very important regulation tool for neurodivergent brains, especially those who struggle with their mental health. There are likely to be many people from the ND community who are extremely creative in their daily lives but wouldn't necessarily consider themselves to be "artists", but using art as a distraction for busy brains or busy bodies can be a vital tool for managing anxiety. Creative activities can also help facilitate connection, providing the opportunity to socialise without the pressure of eye contact or social cues, and a focal point for conversation or shared interests. So, offering an event to demonstrate this, along with local support and advice (we will have local ND charities on site to provide this), brings people together, helps them find their tribe, and can also be a catalyst for better mental health and healthier emotional regulation.

I hope that it will also open a discussion on inclusion in the arts and events industry in general, a chance to see what ND friendly actually looks like, and how beneficial it can be to the whole community.

[Join us](#) for a day of creative activities, talks, and workshops on Sunday 27 September.



Clay Bust workshop

Meet the course tutor: Sarah John

Sarah is a practising ceramics and fine artist and is a regular tutor at Exeter Phoenix. Observation of human and natural form (in both 2D and 3D media) has remained central to her interests. Sarah focuses on learning 'ways to see' that are key for expressing the world of form around us, and on sharing skills and techniques in an informal atmosphere, which bring out the best creative ideas. We chatted with Sarah to find out more about her practice and what she enjoys most about teaching classes here.

What does your creative practice involve?

My creative practice centres on the human form/ the body and the psyche. Limitless inspiration comes from the unique characters of the models and learners in the classroom. The gathering of beings sharing the vulnerability of making something from no thing , enthrals.

I like to explore materials and gather processes used by artists of all kinds. Experimentation gives surprise effects, to the joy of everyone in the class, including myself. Every session is a learning time for me as I notice each persons discoveries, we pool our knowledge.

What is your favourite medium/subject/technique to teach and why?

Cool clay brings sensation and 'form knowledge' to the room. 3d Actuality and Construction replaces illusion (as in 2d work). Learning continues well beyond the classroom, when we abstract and smooth , and perhaps, exaggerate the forms we have observed, as the clay becomes leather hard.

Charcoal, black smudgable and tactile, erasable, on the end of a long stick, over paint, mixing with and changing the tones of the work. For life drawing, using the finger tips in its crushed dust adds the makers human mark and keeps the work alive and sensitised.

Ink, fluid, we follow its bidding. New mark making possibilities arise using string or say a feather.

Watercolour has to be watched. Dropping pure colour on to a wet page! Endless effects with salt, or masking or blotting. Gathering pine branches, cones, holly, ivy, mossy sticks, catkins, and willow wands, the room smells earthy and fresh. Straw covers the floor and string binds materials into wreath circles. The year is marked again.

From Sketchbook to Show



What do you enjoy most about teaching creative classes?

Variety. I never bored.

Giving and receiving gentle respect and encouragement for all present, learners and models, the worker dogs, and reverence for the body / the human form. The generous exchange of ideas and the friendly fun and camaraderie of exploring the massive subject that is Art.

Find out more about our range of creative courses [here](#).

Expressive Drawing Workshop





A Q+A with Riddlestick Theatre

Acclaimed folk theatre company Riddlestick Theatre are presenting a new musical comedy at Exeter Phoenix, inspired by English lore, folk horror, and 'wyrd' 1970s telly, featuring traditional and original music and dance. We caught up with them to find out more about where they started and what they enjoy about the South West creative scene.

How did you start out as a theatre company? Did you know each other beforehand?

We met studying Drama at the University of Bristol in 2012. We officially formed Riddlestick Theatre in 2016 – a year after we'd graduated. It can be hard getting your foot in the theatre industry door, so we decided we'd give making our own shows a go. We'd written a comedy musical called *The Dead of Night in the Middle of Nowhere*. We rounded up some of our talented

friends, and between shifts working as ushers, babysitters and bartenders, with very little money, resources and space to rehearse (mostly crammed into our bedrooms) – we made it happen! Our first performance was at the Cardiff Fringe Festival. Two years later, our second show *The Cabinet of Madame Fanny Du Thé* was listed in *The Guardian's* 'Best Shows at the Edinburgh Festival'.

What did you enjoy and learn from starting out in the South West?

We're based in Bristol, which is a wonderful place to be a theatre-maker. There's a thriving theatre scene with loads of supportive venues, fellow creatives, and of course – audiences! As we developed as a company, we were able to leave our cramped bedrooms and make our shows in rehearsal spaces around the city, as well as performing at different venues across the South West – Penzance, Bodmin, Watchet, Bristol,



Exeter! In theatres, rooms above pubs, village halls, barns, all sorts! Each different venue and audience bringing something different to each show and helping us hone our style. As a folk theatre company, the South West has been incredibly inspiring in its cultural history and folk traditions – particularly for Barleycorn, which is set in a fictional South West village called Hopley Drew.

What are you looking forward to in bringing your show back to the SW?

We're looking forward to the South West audiences – in our experience, they're always up for a laugh! Barleycorn is set in a pub, which is very important to the show, so we're also looking forward to getting a lovely pint in a local pub afterwards (suggestions very much welcome!) Cheers!

Join us to see

[Barleycorn](#) on Sun 20

Sep at 7.30pm





Nicola Bealing's studio at CAST

20 years of Exeter Contemporary Open - A Q+A with Nicola Bealing

2026 marks the 20th anniversary of Exeter Contemporary Open (ECO), Exeter's annual open submission exhibition for UK-based artists. Part of Exeter Phoenix's thriving art scene, the exhibition provides an important national platform for contemporary visual artists, with an emphasis on supporting both emerging talent and more established artists. Ahead of the exhibition, we chatted to Nicola Bealing, who featured in the 2024 Contemporary Open exhibition, and has just a solo exhibition *Miserable Sinners* at Exeter Phoenix.

Where was your practice/career at when you were exhibited in the Contemporary Open?

My core practice is painting but I also make monoprints and installations. In 2024, when 2 of my paintings were included in

EXETER CONTEMPORARY OPEN

13 SEPT – 02 NOV 2024



Image from Exeter Contemporary Open 2024

the ECO I'd just finished working on Dead-man's Fingers, an immersive installation combining paintings and sculptural elements which was developed during lockdown and shown at Matt's Gallery (2023) and Newlyn Gallery (2024).

What was the most memorable part of the experience?

The opening of the ECO was definitely memorable - meeting the other exhibitors, seeing the such varied work pulled together into a cohesive whole - and sharing the sense of achievement and celebration with other artists.

Do you feel that it shaped your practice going forward, and how?

Open exhibitions with the curatorial rigour of the ECO are very rare, which is what makes it such a privilege to be part of. In the most direct sense, having been part of the CO enabled me to have a dialogue which led to my recent solo show : Miserable Sinners at Exeter Phoenix Gallery - an amazing opportunity and positive experience.

This year's exhibition opens on [Fri 11 Sep](#). Join us for the gallery tours on Weds 23rd Sept, 12pm and Sat 17 Oct, 12pm. There is no need to book: just turn up on the day.

Image from Miserable Sinners, Jul - Aug 2026, credit Dom Moore



Lead Artist for Public Art Commission | Deadline: Mon 05 Oct

Torridge District Council invites expressions of interest for a context-specific public art commission in Westward Ho!, a vibrant village on the Atlantic coast within the Northern Devon UNESCO Biosphere. Artist Design Fee: £15k; Fabrication and Installation: £30k; Engagement: £5k Timescale: 2yrs

[Find out more and apply](#)

Ensembler Performer (YETI, Exeter Phoenix, Christmas 2026) | Deadline: Fri 18 Sep

Quirk Theatre is seeking to cast 1 outstanding performer, who presents as female, is aged 18-50 and based in or near Exeter, to join the ensemble for YETI, performing at Exeter Phoenix in December 2026.

[Find out more here](#)

Battle of the Bands call out | Deadline: Thu 08 Oct

Wildcard battle of the bands is coming back to Exeter in 2026, and are looking for bands interested in taking part.

The first four rounds will take place at Bomba Exeter on Thu 08 Oct, Fri 09 Oct, Thu 15 Oct and Fri 16 Oct with the final taking place here at Exeter Phoenix on Sun 15 Nov.

[Find out more here](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Exeter Northcott Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Phoenix (Elevate Festival) | Deadline: 10am, Mon 28 Sep

Exeter Northcott Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Phoenix offers South-West based artists in need of an audience a chance to stretch their ideas and the opportunity to test their work in the Clifford Room at the Barnfield Theatre, along with £150 to help develop their idea and a small amount of rehearsal space before the Scratch Night.

This Scratch Night will be taking place at Barnfield Theatre during Elevate Festival on Mon 02 Nov, 7pm - 9pm.

[Find out more and apply](#)

Make Space - Open Call | Deadline: 14 Sep

Make Space unlocks spaces within arts organisations for artists to set up, test and reflect on their work. Through Make Space, artists can apply for space in partner organisations for focused periods of time. For the 2026 pilot, Visual Arts South West is partnering with KARST in Plymouth and Spike Island in Bristol.

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Networking

[Playwrights Cafe Exeter](#)

[DOCLAB](#)

[Little Scratch Night](#)

[Exeter Film Collective](#)

[We Animate on Tues](#)

Professional Development

[South West Dance Hub](#)

[Exeter Film Collective Writing Group](#)

Recommended Events

[Exeter Seed Bank: Seed Packing Workshops](#) | Sat 26 Sep -
Sat 05 Dec | 2pm - 4pm

[Kaleidoscopic Minds: Festival of Neurodiversity](#) | Sun 27 Sep,
from 11am - 4pm

[Exeter Contemporary Open exhibition tours](#) | Weds 23rd
Sept, 12pm and Sat 17 Oct, 12pm. Just turn up on the
day.

EVENTS

IN EXETER

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity you'd like to be shared? Send us a message on the [Creative Hub Facebook page](#) and we'll include what we can in future editions.



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